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CHANGING MOODS

By

GEORGE ELLISTON





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CHANGING MOODS

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By
GEORGE ELLISTON
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SIGN OF THE PEN AND PAD
1922

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TO MY FRIEND
PENELOPE STRATTON SHANNON

CHANGING MOODS	11
THE UNFORGOTTEN	12
BEAUTY THE WHIMSICAL	13
SUMMER	14
LOST YOUTH	15
MAGIC	16
MONOTONE	17
QUIET STREETS	18
INQUIRY	19
WHEN LOVE COMES LATE TO WOMEN	20
SANCTUARY	21
BEAUTY	22
APRIL IMMUNE	23
SOUL ALIVE	24
GOLDEN WEDDING BRIDE	25
BLUE HOLLYHOCKS	26
BRIMMING CUP	27
APRIL	28
IN TRAFFIC	29
LONGING	30
INTROSPECTION	31
CANDLELIGHT SONGS	32

AFTER DEATH	33
POETRY	34
END OF THE MAY	35
LAMENT	36
OLD SHIPS	37
RESURRECTION	38
PARTING OF THE WAYS	39
SINCERITY	40
CANDOR	41
THE REJECTED	42
DEAR GHOSTS	43
THE SPIRIT	44
FIGHTING COURAGE	45
GREENWICH VILLAGE	46
THE USUAL STARS	47
HILL BELOVED	48
OH THAT I MAY HAVE LOVE	49
CHOICE	50
CHILDLESS WOMEN	51
INDIAN SUMMER	52

CHANGING MOODS

CHANGING MOODS

*Whirlwind they come and go
These changing moods of ours.
Mysterious ebb and flow—*

*Today, weighed down with grief,
Is swept with pain and woe
Passing faith or belief—*

*Tomorrow, love will live
Again, the soul take hope
In what its heaven may give.*

*Like phantom figures on
A screen, these changing moods
Here for a breath—and gone.*

THE UNFORGOTTEN

TODAY, you whispered to me
From the lilac hedge you loved—
What's death but mockery?
All day you've been beside me.

Down by the meadow bars
This morning first I knew,
And now beneath the stars—
Nothing can keep you from me.

Death has but made you dearer
Who live within my soul;
Death has but brought you nearer
In life and death to me.

BEAUTY, THE WHIMSICAL

BEAUTY is a curious elf;
To some she shines in glory,
In silver rain and in blue delf—
From others hides her story.

Once I saw her in a smile
So wan and woe-begone:
And yet there for a little while
Was beauty like the dawn.

Sometimes she is stalking pain,
Sometimes rioting,
Sometimes in a country lane
Where the violets sing.

Beauty is a curious elf,
Whether friend or foe;
Loveliest when just herself
Any heart may know.

SUMMER

SO beautiful is summer
I hang it on a bough,
And bending down I worship,
My soul enthralled in Now.

So beautiful is summer
I fling it to the ground,
And revel in the music
And the mystery of its sound.

So beautiful is summer
I clasp it to my breast;
It is so weirdly lovely,
I cannot stop nor rest.

So beautiful is summer
I snare it to my heart,
And pray to be made worthy
Of half its subtle art.

LOST YOUTH

YOUTH^a went by me in the night
And I knew her not;
Blind to all her rosy light,
Pity me, my lot.

Now the need of laughter lacking
Haunts my waking thought,
Like a wild thing blindly tracking
In a forest caught.

I would know what never can be;
Lend me bitterness,
All my own does nor suffice me
What I would express.

MAGIC

THERE in the garden's center
Is a merry singing fountain,
Its lilting song I fain
Would know.
Winds that blow,
Birds that fly
Gaily by
Seem to catch the rhythm.
Why not I?

Might I know the words?
Fountain won't you tell?
Or would that break the spell
Of song
Sung so long
To rose and bee
And listening tree;
Ah, perhaps best not
Tell it me.

MONOTONE

ALARM clock at six-thirty—
A lazy consciousness
Of life's returning force,
And then a vague, vague guess
As to the vivid sound.

Conviction and a sudden
Sense of righteous duty:
Apparel quickly donned,
A smell akin to beauty—
Ham an' the day's begun!

Newspaper to be read,
A street car to be caught,
And hurry, rush and hurry,
All these things duly wrought—
Downtown's at last achieved.

And now the busy day
Of office work—oasis
At midday; then, five-thirty—
Hurry—one must not miss
The home-bound trolley car.

So does the city live
In breathless speed, its tide
Of tasks bound in between
Morning and evening ride—
Tomorrows all alike.

QUIET STREETS

SOME live in quiet streets
And naught of all the noise and sound
Touches their consciousness.

They live serene, aloof, profound
Unto themselves, but out

Of traffic's dim and mad dismay,
Their only contact with

This world as with a foreign fray
Seen in a dream, unreal, untrue

Peace traps the souls of those

Who live always in quiet streets,
Content with piecemeal life,

Content with their inane retreats.
Dead e'er their death, the real

Rejected and the days gone stale—
Better one vivid day

Of effort, though that one day fail,
Than quiet streets a thousand years!

INQUIRY

WHY should I know longing
For the plains who never saw them?
Why should there come thronging
In my mind the dreams of gentian—
Who have only heard the mention
Of that lovely flower or seen
It perhaps upon a screen?

Why should I know longing
For the loves that poets sing—
With the city noise ding-donging
Ever through a tired brain
Hurrying homeward in the rain?
Did I somehow, somewhere know
These things in some long ago?

WHEN LOVE COMES LATE TO WOMEN

YOU speak of love and I thrill to the sound

Because I love you too—profound—
This thing that comes a shimmering light
Sweet as cool rain in summer night—
And yet I am afraid, afraid.

There is a treasure I would not give up
For all life's riches in my cup,
And when I look into your eyes
And see the promised paradise,
It seems a snare through centuries laid.

What is your love and what it is you seek,
Not what would make my own life bleak?
You will not sink my soul to where
It has no breath but your soul's air?
Men have—and I'm afraid, afraid.

SANCTUARY

LITTLE room,
Last night we met as strangers,
And I, worn out with dangers,
My heart and soul beset
With worry, fear and fret,
Fleeing from noise and sound,
Found you and sleep profound.

Little room
That held me in your arms,
Sheltered from dread alarms
Secure throughout the night,
I humbly crave the right,
Stirred deep by your endeavor,
To call you friend forever.

BEAUTY

WHY do the idle weep
That in the wake
Of beauty there comes grief?
Often it is relief
When loveliness is brief.

It is enough for me
That beauty is—
To hunt it to its lair,
To find it unaware,
To know it everywhere.

APRIL, IMMUNE

NEW warmth in ling'ring twilight,
New hope in stark grey trees
Whisper the miracle
Alive in each smug breeze.

I, too, wait longingly,
But I shall wait in vain,
For what my soul is seeking—
Earth will not know again.

.

Somewhere he too is finding,
Who sleeps in far off France,
This April so forgetful
Of bitter circumstance.

SOUL ALIVE

MY days are drab and commonplace,
But, oh, my dreams, my dreams—
Days may be dour, but oh, God's grace,
My dreams, my golden dreams!

I travel over magic seas
In fair white sailing ships
Who never have felt the salty breeze
Nor been where sea foam drips.

Never a port is closed to me
Nor to adventuring:
Oh, dull and blank my days may be,
But my soul can sing and sing

What if I'm tied from eight to five,
My dreams atone, atone.
By grace of God my soul's alive
And comes into its own.

GOLDEN WEDDING BRIDE

BRING me little trophies
Of the dear dead long ago:
Sudden smiles and kisses
Not premeditate and slow—
Fifty years we're married,
But, my dear, some souls stay young
And I'd die where springtime lingers
With her violets unsung.

Youthful joy and laughter
I'd have with us to the end,
Garlands of the May days
Shining out around each bend;
Memories—just a background—
Not confused with what's ahead;
Singing lips and merry hearts
To meet the happy dead

BLUE HOLLYHOCKS

IF only when the world was new
They'd made some hollyhocks in blue,
My garden plot would be perfection.
I like the pink ones very much,
And red ones give a gorgeous touch,
But oh, for a hollyhock sky-blue

Can't you just see them on the stalk
Extra stately, there by the walk,
With a heavenly trellis of white behind?
Hollyhocks white and hollyhocks red
Are wonderful things for a flower bed;
But a hollyhock blue—oh, heart's desire!

Hollyhocks red are vivid fire,
And of hollyhocks yellow I never tire.
Hollyhocks one and all I love
But a hollyhock mirroring the blue of the sky—
It is useless and futile for me to deny—
Would be of all flowers the one I'd love best.

BRIMMING CUP

MY Cup of Happiness filled up—
Filled up to its clean round rim
With youth and love, oh, wonder cup—
They bubbled over the brim.

But I was afraid to drink—afraid
Of life and poverty.
I was betrayed by my fears—betrayed,
And my cup was lost to me.

Once more my cup is full—once more,
After the long, long years;
But wisdom and gold are now its store
And my drink is salt—for tears.

APRIL

APRIL that lays wet fingers on
The world with such reward,
Alladin of a hundred dreams
That need each one a bard.

April, Magician of the year,
Whose touch is life, whose breath
Has in it wondrous alchemy
That triumphs over death.

April, the best beloved of all—
Fantastic, glorious time
Of new born life and Robin's call,
To you once more a rhyme.

IN TRAFFIC

YOUR passing—
Perhaps it was a word
Or just a glance
Something deep down you stirred
Sharply—as with a lance—
And I see violets of spring.

Your passing—
Strange that I cannot tell
How you have snared my mind
And cast a magic spell
My soul has not defined—
But all the woodlands sing.

Your passing—
Like some old melody
Haunts me through many days
Clear-cut,—twang of salt sea
In traffic's dull amaze—
Keeps me remembering!

LONGING

IF only you would come to me tonight—
When all the world is shining silver bright
And hold me close against your throbbing heart,
As if I were, in deed and truth, a part
Of your existence evermore.
If only you would come!

My soul would be as crimson as my blood,
For my whole being's swept as with a flood
By longing for yourself, flesh touching flesh,
Your hand in mine, your hair's bright shimmering mesh
Against my cheek. Oh, my dear love,
If only you would come!

INTROSPECTION

THE road to yesterday
Is burdened with a catafalque
Mysterious and grey.

I dare not lift the pall
From off that dark slow-moving train—
For fear one voice might call.

Then would I never go
Toward those dull undesired tomorrows
That I long not to know.

CANDLE LIGHT SONGS

SING me songs of candlelight,
Sweetheart, for the day's been hard,
Bring into the early night
Lyrics of an humble bard.

Nothing tedious or staid,
Just some treasured heartfelt tune
Softly on the twilight laid
Drifting in with dusk and moon.

Something you can chant, my dear,
Gently, like a lullaby,
Something simple and sincere—
Songs that help men live and die.

AFTER DEATH

DEATH of itself is not my thought,
For those adventures that fate has brought
Make it as natural as life or birth
Or the turning round of the curious earth.

But this is the thing that my thoughts ponder
As I gaze out on the garden yonder—
What growing things shall spring from my clay
When it has served me for my little day?

Once long ago a Persian sighed
For wine for his dust when his body had died;
But the thing that would mean the most to me
Would be for my dust to cherish a tree.

POETRY

WITHIN my heart there glows
A gay white light—
Lovely as some bright rose.

Through struggle storm and sorrow
This light is mine
Illumining all tomorrow.

Life would be naught to me
Without my light,
The flame of poetry.

END OF THE MAY

I HAVE your love, and yet
Life is no easy thing,
For I want no regret
In Love's adventuring

It weighs so on my thought—
This love that brightly flowers—
That sometimes, overwrought,
I keep unhappy hours.

Not that I doubt you—no—
But that I dread the day
That tests love's steadiest glow,
The ending of the May.

LAMENT

EVERY sort of love I knew,
But now I have forgotten.
Tender, oh, and very true,
A scheme whose core is rotten
That can take from love and laughter—
Grimly to unknown hereafter—
You, that were the essence of the May.

Every sort of love I knew,
But why should I remember?
Fate is but an ugly shrew,
And June is as December.
I am put to utter rout;
You that were my light gone out
Suddenly, before the dawn of day.

OLD SHIPS

I, WHO had longed for fame
In youth, who saw my name
Shining in silver light,
Renown, star bright,
And gave up all to be
Mother and wife, am free
Long since of all regret.

Those dreams I hearkened to,
Those ships that sailed the blue,
Have come at last to harbor:
All I longed for—
My son, who brought them in
Has cancelled might-have-been
And glorified the sunset.

RESURRECTION

YOUTH lay dead within me,
And never made a sign.
Love will bury youth
When you give it by design.

Youth was dust and ashes,
And not a rose tint lay
Upon the fearful sameness
Of the grey and usual day.

And then—without my bidding—
Came love that laughs like glee.
Dear God, the resurrection!
Youth riots now in me!

PARTING OF THE WAYS

WE come to parting of the ways
Whose lives love once bound up together
For all of time, but now naught stays
Of that close tie but memory.

And strangest of sad things, my heart
Is empty of all feeling now;
Complaisant, as we go apart,
Bankrupt of all emotions' wealth.

And yet my mind knows this always,
Though love is dead and at an end,
That which was you—oh, strange amaze—
Is mine unchanged for all of time.

What each of us will be, remains
Our own—but those dead years are fixed:
In what we build the soul retains
The you and me of yesterdays.

SINCERITY

I CAN bear your moods—
But—never come to me
When that thing intrudes
That is mockery.

All the love you want
For your love I'll give,
But you must not flaunt
Love that's like a sieve.

While you are my lover
All your heart I'll claim,
Nothing under cover—
Nor what's just a name—

I'll bear anything,
Anything, my dear,
While to me you bring
Love that is sincere.

CANDOR

A LITTLE wind swept,
And a little late
Women are asking
Candor of fate.

The old and accepted
Defeated—are gone—
And women, standing
In a new dawn,

Are taking new duty,
Seeking new power,
Scorning traditions
Of the old hour.

In the loud clamour
Come wonder with me.
Are women happier
Now, being “free”?

THE REJECTED

SORROW came sighing in the night,
And hastily I shut my window,
Afraid with a sudden, nameless fright,
That would not know, that would not know.

Sorrow passed by, and all my days
Move as a placid sunlit sea.
Yet in my heart a stranger stays—
There is a curious vacancy.

Wide is my casement now, inviting,
For my heart sickens with its joy,
And all my soul is withering,
And life that's like a child's gay toy.

Somehow I know it is too late,
I cannot lure adventure back.
I, who have shunned one gift of fate,
Shall lack and lack—and always lack.

DEAR GHOSTS

THIS, then, I write for you
After the years, the tears, the fears,
As I see now what's true,
As calm discretion nears,
The things that tried me most,
The bitter pain, the strain, the rain,
Those things like some dear ghost
Stayed on, when I would fain
Have lost them out of life—
And now their blight and night and fright,
Their hurt and harm and strife,
These make the final light,
The glory of my days.

THE SPIRIT

YOU must not dull the Spirit,
Nor dim its high white light,
For it is the shining presence
Dividing the day from the night.

You must not break the Spirit,
For as long as it rides high,
Nothing in all this world
Its power can defy.

You must not kill the Spirit,
For a man whose soul is dead
Is lost to high achievement,
And his final prayer is said.

FIGHTING COURAGE

GRANT me a courage, Lord,
That visions victory
Upon the darkest day
When fears would vanquish me.

Grant me a courage, Lord,
That in the dreariest hour
Can see, beyond, the light
Of Conquest's shining tower,

Grant me a courage, Lord,
That strengthens with the sorrows,
That moves assured to meet
The grimmet of tomorrows.

GREENWICH VILLAGE

HE moved into Bohemia,
Bohemia, Bohemia,
A-looking for extrema
And rare and curious dreamia,
And what he found was—Dirt.

Old windows that throughout the night
Glowed like old moons with mellow light,
Old crumbling steps that had allure,
Their faults by candlelight secure,
All these the day revealed

And even in Bohemia,
Bohemia, Bohemia,
That land of bold extrema,
Men were the same, though seamier,
Amid the grime and—Dirt.

THE USUAL STARS

OH storm-wracked soul, look up
To where the usual stars
Serenely deck the cup
Of darkened sky.

The usual stars! Life moves
On through accustomed grooves,
In spite of human pain,
In spite of sorrow.

Take comfort then, let grief,
After its due, be brief,
Remembering sorrow is
But part of life.

HILL, BELOVED

ONCE more the sun is shining there—
Upon my hill, that I have loved
So long, and bracing autumn air
Bids me climb up, who long to climb,

I think I have no greater pain
In growing old than this regret—
Of knowing I shall not again
With eager feet mount to the top.

Trees of my hill shall bloom and fruit,
The flowers sway to bees and rain,
And winds shall make a golden lute
Of leaves and grasses growing high—

And I shall not be there to know—
Nor here, after a time, to dream—
But this is true, wherever I go,
There will go with me—this hill beloved.

OH THAT I MAY HAVE LOVE

OH, that I may have Love—
Love for the flowers and bees,
Love for the birds and trees,
For stars and shining seas.
Oh, that I May Have Love!

Oh, that I may have love.
Love of all life about.
I want no cynic's doubt,
When my frail soul goes out.
Oh, that I may have love!

CHOICE

I CARE not if my days be short,
If I may live them to the full.

But in the bright gay-hued retort
I want no commonplace or dull.

Life is not in a length of days,
But in a bold adventurous plan
I hold, the Swift has great amaze—
Oft knows the best of what he ran,

Gaining or losing, who shall say?
For the standards here—are they worth while?
Oh, I will take the shorter day,
That is brimming full, with a cheer and a smile.

CHILDLESS WOMEN

IN childless women's eyes
A misery of lacking lies.
Under their gaiety is woe
And this, one feels, they do not know:

The glad joy of the blue bird winging—
The freshness of the morning singing—
The depths of roses brightly glowing—
The soul of things they should be knowing.

In childless women's eyes
There shines no glimpse of paradise—
Their loss, who miss the high white cross
Of motherhood, eternal loss.

INDIAN SUMMER

DAYS of Indian Summer,
Hazy, Lazy days,
Stirring all my soul
To wonder and amaze.
Days made just for dreaming
By the gold corn's gleaming,
Days of mystery—
All you hold for me!

Memories sweet and tender,
Twilights lost and gone
Sacred to old years
That have now sped on.
Oh, that just by dreaming
By the gold corn's gleaming,
I could bring once more
All my treasure store.

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